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SUBJECT: Aceh Update and Fourth CoSPA Meeting

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¶11. (SBU) Summary. Former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari visited Aceh and Jakarta and pronounced his satisfaction with progress in the peace process while noting concerns regarding rising crime in the province. These concerns were echoed by General Supiadin and FKK Chair Gen Amirrudin who highlighted the growing problem of GAM intimidation of government officials. In a positive step, GAM leaders and officials in Jakarta agreed that the proposed GAM party be called the "Aceh Party." The Committee on Sustaining Peace in Aceh met on May 16 to discuss the establishment of a Joint Claims Settlement Commission as required by the Helsinki MOU. End Summary.

Ahtisaari Visit: Focus on Rising Crime

¶12. (U) Former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari, the main mediator involved in negotiating the signing of the 2005 Helsinki MOU and ending the conflict in Aceh, visited the province from May 2 to May 6 before continuing on to Jakarta for meetings with President Yudhoyono and Vice President Kalla on May 7. The visit was made to fulfill an informal agreement that he visit Aceh annually to review implementation of the peace accords. The visit included travel to several regencies within Aceh and meetings with the senior Indonesian military and police commanders in Banda Aceh as well as meetings with Governor Irwandi Yusuf and other senior provincial figures. Ahtisaari told members of the press that he is satisfied with the progress in the peace process but is concerned about rising crime and encouraged both GAM and the government to work to control it. Ahtisaari also stressed the need to continue reintegration programs.

GAM Party Renamed the Aceh Party

¶13. (SBU) After being informed in mid-April that Jakarta had rejected the proposed revised name and symbol of the GAM party, party leaders agreed to rename the organization "The Aceh Party." Governor Irwandi Yusuf told Ambassador Hume, during his May 1-5 visit to Aceh, that he himself had brokered the deal by negotiating directly with KPA Commander/Party Chairman Muzakir Manaf and Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security Widodo. Had he not done so, he said, there was a risk that the issue could fester, feeding lingering suspicions between the two sides. Irwandi added that he believes GAM party candidates will perform extremely well in the 2009 legislative elections.

Ex-GAM Eager for elections; Remain Impatient for Progress

¶4. (SBU) In a meeting with visiting National War College students arranged and attended by Consulate Medan staff on May 13, Aceh Transition Committee (KPA) Vice Chairman Kamaruddin and 12 other local KPA district commanders voiced their frustration at the progress of reintegration programs in Aceh. Kamaruddin lamented what he claimed was a "total lack" of reintegration programs and repeatedly voiced his lack of confidence in Aceh Reintegration Body (BRA) chairman Nur Djuli. Kamaruddin added that KPA had asked the Indonesian government in Jakarta to stop funding BRA because of this lack of confidence.

¶5. (SBU) Despite the KPA's expressed dissatisfaction with BRA, the issue is primarily rooted in internal GAM politics, not performance. Because of a bitter, long-standing personal dispute between BRA Chairman Nur Djuli and GAM "Prime Minister" Malik Mahmud, Malik's loyalists have refused to participate directly in programs organized by BRA. This places Malik and other KPA ideologues in a bind: they want assistance to flow to victims of the conflict, but they want to be seen as directing that assistance. If BRA is perceived as being too successful, it raises the profile of rival GAM leaders while undermining KPA's claim that the organization is needed to lobby on behalf of conflict victims and former combatants. KPA's proposed solution is for the government to hand BRA's reins over to KPA, something neither the governor nor Jakarta would conceivably accept.

¶6. (SBU) The KPA district commanders stated their continuing preparations for forming the Aceh Party were progressing, and that most of those present in the May 13 meeting would run for local

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parliament seats in April, 2009. They also spoke repeatedly about the "roundtable" process of negotiations in Jakarta on implementing the peace process in Aceh, a parallel institution to the ongoing Committee on Sustaining Peace in Aceh (CoSPA) and their monthly meetings (reftel). Kamaruddin added that the recent Ahtisaari visit was a positive sign for KPA and highlighted the continuing international interest in Aceh.

¶7. (SBU) Kamaruddin and the KPA district commanders reiterated their commitment to the Helsinki MOU and their intention to abide by the peace agreement. They called on the Government of Indonesia to do the same, adding that they believed that the Indonesian military was currently basing some 30,000 soldiers in Aceh, far above the "organic" 14,700 level allowed for in the MOU. Nevertheless, Kamaruddin made it clear that the KPA remained committed to peace and the reintegration of all former fighters. Pressed regarding what type of reintegration programs KPA desires, Kamaruddin and his colleagues added that they were not as interested in getting jobs as they were in ensuring the central government met its responsibilities under the peace agreement to provide either land or employment to able-bodied former combatants. (oops, odd contradiction not jobs but employment?)

Crime and Intimidation

¶8. (SBU) According to both General Supiadin and the leadership of FKK, intimidation of government officials and private businesses, ostensibly by former GAM members, has is an extremely serious problem. FKK Chairman General Amirrudin told Ambassador Hume that former combatants have threatened government officials demanding contracts or money. Several newly installed office heads, he said, have already received a bullet and note warning them that they are being watched. The point, he said, was to terrorize and soften the officials up for when ex-combatants compete for contracts or other benefits.

Breakthrough on UXO

¶9. (SBU) All around Aceh, Amiruddin added, there are small caches of grenades, mortar rounds, and other explosives that were hidden by GAM members during the conflict. Since the end of the conflict there have been numerous incidents in which people have been injured by these weapons. General Amiruddin told Ambassador Hume that GAM

had recently agreed to help FKK locate the caches so the weapons can be destroyed. FKK, he said, would welcome any assistance the U.S. could provide in disposing of these weapons.

Governor Irwandi: Focus on Economics

¶10. (SBU) During a May 13 meeting with Governor Irwandi Yusuf and visiting students from the National War College, the governor told Consulate Medan staff that his main focus remained the economic development of the province. He cited aquaculture and agribusiness as two areas for expanded economic activity in Aceh. Irwandi added that he has great confidence in the current government in Jakarta and their commitment to the peace process. The governor added, implausibly, that rising crime may be a fact of life, but that in relation to other provinces in Indonesia the crime rate remains in fact very low and that the current focus is the result of post-conflict sensitivity to any violence in Aceh.

¶11. (SBU) Irwandi also described calls to divide the province as extremely unhelpful because they provided false hope to those who were dissatisfied with Aceh's provincial government. He saw those seeking to encourage these parts of Aceh in their separatist tendencies as political opportunists. Apparently unaware that Riau Island province was carved out of Riau province despite strong opposition from the provincial government, governor Irwandi insisted that any decision to create a separate province would require both his and the provincial legislature's approval, something that he stated would never realistically happen.

Fourth CoSPA Meeting: Joint Claims Settlement Commission

¶12. (U) The CoSPA meeting held on May 16 focused on the establishment of a Joint Claims Settlement Commission (JCSC) as required by the Helsinki MOU. Attendees included Governor Irwandi

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Yusuf, General Supiadin AS on behalf of the Indonesian Military, FKK and GAM representatives, and representatives from the Indonesian National Police. The attendees agreed that the JCSC should be composed of 5-7 independent representatives designed to review reintegration cases where the BRA had denied benefits and the petitioner appealed the BRA's decision. It was agreed by the members in attendance to establish a small working group to decide the parameters and method of choosing the JCSC.

¶13. (SBU) General Supiadin repeatedly noted that any actions taken by the CoSPA in establishing the JCSC would also act as precedents for areas of conflict in Indonesia such as Maluku and Papua. Supiadin stressed the need for careful consideration in the process of defining who had the right, as an ex-combatant or as a victim of the Aceh conflict, to seek compensation from the BRA and eventually the JCSC. Supiadin's concerns seemed to stem from the fact that while the BRA is a local organization with an Aceh-only mandate, the proposed JCSC involves formalizing the elements of the Helsinki MOU dealing with this issue, therefore requiring the central government to approve the process and creating a legal precedent for future post-conflict negotiations.

¶14. (SBU) The second topic on the agenda of the CoSPA, the question of using civilian courts to try soldiers accused of crimes against civilians during the conflict, was turned aside by General Supiadin through his argument that the CoSPA lacked jurisdiction on the matter. (A draft reform bill on military justice is being worked with the DPR; it would institute civilian trials.) Supiadin provided an overview of the Indonesian military's current progress in internal reforms designed to improve the military courts system and noted that again this question is Indonesia-wide and not Aceh-specific, therefore the government of Indonesia could not agree to discuss details in an Aceh-only forum. He added again the question of impact on the regions of Maluku and Papua and the question of precedent. The attendees agreed to postpone discussion on the issue.

HUME